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General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

18th plenary meeting
Friday, 20 September 2002, 10.30 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jan Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Statement by the President on the occasion of the International Day of Peace

The President: Before giving the floor to the first speaker for this morning, I should like to recall that, by its resolution 55/282, the General Assembly decided that, with effect from the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the International Day of Peace shall be observed every year on 21 September. By the same resolution, the General Assembly declared the International Day of Peace to be a day of global ceasefire and non-violence and invited all nations and people to commemorate the day by honouring a 24-hour cessation of hostilities and through, inter alia, education and public awareness.

For the past two decades the United Nations has been commemorating the International Day of Peace. By adopting resolution 55/282, however, the General Assembly not only set a firm date for the observance of the International Day of Peace, but also provided a forum through which the International Day of Peace could have a global reach and a practical impact. I believe that the decision adopted at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly has thus strengthened the significance of the Day — a significance which should grow even greater in coming years.

Address by Mr. Gustavo Noboa Bejarano, President of the Republic of Ecuador

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ecuador.

Mr. Gustavo Noboa Bejarano, President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gustavo Noboa Bejarano, President of the Republic of Ecuador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Noboa Bejarano (*spoke in Spanish*): Many of the heads of State that have preceded me at this rostrum have been eloquent in expressing their open condemnation of terrorism, their prescriptions for the eradication of extreme poverty, their vision for a new international order that will ensure peace and security in the world and their reservations about a globalization process that, if poorly understood, will in the end make the gap between rich and poor unbridgeable.

We want to stress above all the urgent need to take action and to begin to commit new and greater financial resources to development. We must strengthen our common bond and work together to try to find solutions to the problems that affect us all.

We, the poor countries, are asked to practise austerity and fiscal discipline, respect the rules of the free market and free trade and cooperate in the fight

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against the scourges that afflict humankind. When we try to obtain access to the major markets for our goods, however, the door is slammed shut. We are asked to be competitive, but when we take the fruits of our labour to the market, subsidies amounting to millions of dollars are placed in our way, making it impossible for us to even hope to compete.

We are asked to participate in the fight against drug trafficking, but we have not been given the resources promised us to enable us to carry out our action plans.

When we try to negotiate in a serious and creative way with international lending agencies, attempts are made to impose terms on us — terms that, if accepted, would dangerously weaken our young and sometimes fragile democracies.

People don't understand: our peoples, in their poverty, are quite perceptive, but they still cannot understand how they can benefit from a globalization process that may never knock at their doors.

We, the leaders of the developing countries, are severely criticized when, upon our return from summits and forums, we have only meagre results to show, and when the resolve to provide support and cooperation is weakened because of the actions of a few with respect to a consensus declaration.

I want to be very clear and simple in expressing my thoughts in this universal forum: hypocrisy, inequity, injustice, increased poverty and failure to take action, among other ills, are the main reasons for breaches of the peace. They create a framework in which violence, sectarian extremism and misunderstanding find fertile ground.

The developed world has found new and discriminatory methods — in financial, social and ethical terms — of categorizing our countries. Some are willing to perpetuate this perverse way of categorizing us on the basis of criteria laid down by those that have more than we do. We are criticized for a lack of transparency and for some alleged lack of respect for the law, while enormous losses are piling up owing to corruption. Could it be that the very foundations of the capital system have been seriously damaged by the scandals that have taken place in the wealthier and more powerful nations?

Our emigrants are discriminated against, and some forget how the most prosperous nations managed to create their identities through the mixing of races or by opening their arms to those yearning for progress and freedom. Developed countries demand the strengthening of our institutions and they get quite lyrical in their support for democratic processes, which often take forms that lead only to instability. We must break paradigms, and we must do it now. We must not persist in simplifying, relying on a purely economic vocabulary, all the benefits of a globalization process that is still not understood by all, nor assimilated in each of its components.

We speak of free flows of capitals, but these flows only take the form of transfers of investments in the Northern Hemisphere. We countries in the Southern Hemisphere have typically received these same capitals in the form of expensive loans, whose heavy burden it has been impossible to alleviate over time.

When the North looks to the South, it sees it with paternalistic and patronizing eyes. The widely publicized equity in the terms of exchange is only visible in statements, manuals and textbooks of developed countries. What we need is a new global ethic, one that repudiates terrorism but helps, with the same strength and resolve, give substance to our creative efforts to eradicate poverty, a poverty that threatens the most basic principles of human dignity.

When food is lacking, when there is no health or education, and when the survival instinct itself is limited, very little or nothing can be done to pursue values and ideals cherished by any developed society. My country condemns terrorism. My government supports every effort to eradicate it, but Ecuador also demands the creation of a new coalition and a new order to fight against poverty.

This is a new century, a century of solidarity and hope. But we must also make this century a century of respect on the part of all nations for the principles that govern international law. Yes, it is a new century, a century in which all activities that violate the sanctity of human life are condemned and prosecuted. There is no justification whatsoever for taking the lives of innocent persons. We must work with all forces available, together under the law, to fight this scourge.

This is also a century of changes of attitudes and of proposals, a time in which we must resolve definitively the problem of the debt of the poorest countries towards the developed countries. It must be a

time of opportunity to build a fairer world, a world of solidarity.

As a global citizen, I am concerned that the commitment to ensure the very existence of the planet is not shared equitably by all. Everything is demanded of those of us who have great diversity and renewable resources, but, in return, we are denied the financial tools to seek alternative resources for a development not entailing the destruction of our natural resources, as if this commitment to the environment should fall on our shoulders alone. We must fight to improve the quality of life on earth. But the beneficiaries of this struggle must be every man and woman on earth, and not only those with the good fortune to have been born in the North.

Ecuador, which I am honoured to represent in this Assembly, is a country committed to the most noble causes of the international community. No effort will be spared to enable our people to reach a human society in which men, women and children, without distinction, without exclusion, can develop fully and flourish.

Ecuador wants to be an ethical model that looks to the future. We wish to see the voice of reason heard in every global forum. We want to create a world of freedom, a more just and united society. We would like, from the centre of the two hemispheres, to be a bridge uniting North and South, two regions that should walk together towards development and not be separated by geographic conventions.

Thank you so much, distinguished delegates, for this extraordinary opportunity to address the world community. Thank you for your continuing efforts to make the United Nations the highest forum of international debate. My country and my Government view this body as the highest forum for debate and for the settlement of those problems that constantly affect humankind.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Ecuador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gustavo Noboa Bejarano, President of Ecuador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency, Mr. Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency, Mr. Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Kabbah (Sierra Leone): Two years ago I came to the rostrum of this Assembly with mixed feelings. On the one hand, my country had just witnessed an unprovoked attempt to derail the peace process. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was still recovering from a brazen affront to its military capability and the authority of the Security Council. On the other hand, I was optimistic, first of all because the people of Sierra Leone had once again demonstrated their resolve to maintain their struggle for peace. I was also optimistic because the Security Council had responded appropriately by giving UNAMSIL additional responsibilities within its mandate, and by increasing the troop level of the mission.

Today, I stand here with only one feeling, an overwhelming feeling of joy. At long last the rebel war in Sierra Leone is over. All combatants have been disarmed and demobilized. Reintegration is well under way. Over 55,000 ex-combatants are currently engaged in reintegration programme activities, ranging from formal education and vocational-skills training to small-scale trade, agriculture and community development. While the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration is concentrating on the integration of ex-combatants, another national agency, the National Commission for Social Action, is actively engaged in programmes that will benefit all categories of victims of the brutal war, particularly the most vulnerable population groups.

Most heartening of the recent positive developments was the affirmation four months ago by the people of Sierra Leone that they would never forgo their constitutional right to choose their leaders freely through the ballot box. They sent a resounding message to the entire world that, in Africa, it is still possible to hold free and fair elections.

Our objective was not merely to win the rebel war, but to defend the right of our people to live. We fought against a brutal attempt by a few who, with the

assistance of forces within and outside the subregion, were determined to assume power and gain unimpeded and perpetual access to our mineral resources. My primary objective as the democratically elected leader was for us to win the peace. Today, I am pleased to say here that the people of Sierra Leone are continuing to work assiduously to win the peace.

We share the view that there cannot be real peace in Sierra Leone without justice. The support that we have so far received for the establishment of a special court to bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious breaches of international humanitarian law and the national laws of Sierra Leone should also be regarded as part of the peace dividend.

We are also convinced that we cannot speak about lasting peace in Sierra Leone without national reconciliation. Making the Truth and Reconciliation Commission fully operational after its inauguration in July 2002 has now become one of our major preoccupations. Let me add, however, that inadequate international support for the Commission could jeopardize pr spects for national reconciliation which, members will agree with me, is one of the prerequisites of lasting peace and justice.

The victory that the people of Sierra Leone have so far achieved in the peace process is theirs, but not theirs alone. It is also a victory for the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the entire international community. Indeed, it is a victory for humanity, for all those who cherish the dignity and worth of the human person. Therefore, let me take this opportunity, on behalf of every Sierra Leonean, to express our profound and sincere gratitude to the United Nations family, ECOWAS and its Monitoring Group, and other regional intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for their support in our prolonged struggle. This was a partnership for peace and security that we will never forget.

With your permission, Sir, I am obliged once again to single out for commendation some special friendly States that played a crucial role in that effort. I refer to the United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Republics of Guinea, Ghana and Mali, and the United States of America and China, among others. We will always remember their place in the great partnership for peace and security that wrenched Sierra Leone from the verge of total destruction. This is what collective responsibility is all about in our interdependent world.

While we celebrate our mutual success, we should at the same time be aware of the challenges that we face not only in Sierra Leone, but also in the Mano River Union and the West African subregions. Our success notwithstanding, the situation in our part of the continent continues to pose a threat to international peace and security. That threat will remain and could increase if we fail to consolidate the gains that we have made in Sierra Leone. I should therefore like to reiterate my recent appeal to the United Nations and the international community as a whole to remain engaged in our national effort to consolidate our hard-won peace. I was encouraged that, following the May 2002 elections, the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council underscored the need to further consolidate what we have achieved so far.

The people of Sierra Leone and the international community have made considerable investment in material and human resources to bring us to the stage at which we find ourselves today. It would be a terrible mistake if, by sheer complacency and a failure to adopt the appropriate course of action, we should allow the country to slip back into armed conflict. We share the view of the Secretary-General, expressed in his latest report on UNAMSIL, that the Organization should ensure that the next phase of the Mission does not jeopardize the progress achieved so far in stabilizing peace in Sierra Leone.

Beyond Sierra Leone, there are ominous signs of spillover conflicts hovering around the subregion. It would also be tragic if we should underestimate the current threat to peace and go on procrastinating about ways of preventing a spillover.

How then do we go about ensuring, at least in the short run, that Sierra Leone will sustain its newly-won peace? How do we contain the current hostilities across the border with Liberia? The need to address these questions has become more urgent as we approach the end of the current mandate of UNAMSIL. While looking forward to the new phase of that important instrument of peace, I thought that I should draw the attention of the Security Council, through the Secretary-General, to some of the issues that could be taken into consideration and linked to an exit strategy for UNAMSIL.

Recently, I shared my thoughts on this and related matters in a letter which I addressed to the Secretary-General. The letter has since been circulated as Security Council document S/2002/975 of 29 August 2002. Permit me to highlight some of the issues raised in that communication. These are issues related to the capacity of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces and the Sierra Leone police to perform their respective functions more effectively throughout the country; the challenges facing us in the integration of all ex-combatants; the risks following from the turbulent situation in neighbouring Liberia, and particularly its repercussions for peace and stability in Sierra Leone and the Mano River Union as a whole; the danger of the apparent absence of a strategic plan of the international community to address the situation in Liberia, especially as the country approaches crucial elections next year; and finally, the delay in responding to the request for international assistance to ECOWAS in ensuring security on the borders shared by Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

We are pleased that the Secretary-General has taken these and other issues into account in preparing his recommendations to the Security Council for a measured and phased downsizing of UNAMSIL. This will ensure that we do not provoke any new sense of insecurity in a population that has been traumatized for too long. I am also confident that the Security Council will consider the recommendations carefully, especially in the light of my Government's and the Secretary-General's own assessment that the conflict in Liberia still constitutes the most serious threat to the stability that now prevails in Sierra Leone. Who will forget that the 10-year rebel war in Sierra Leone was launched from the territory of Liberia?

The current state of peace and security in Sierra Leone and the rest of the Mano River Union subregion is obviously a matter of constant concern to us. However, as a member of the global community, we are also seriously concerned about impediments to international cooperation for economic and social development; about threats to international peace and security, including the nuclear arms race and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations; and about the rights of such vulnerable population groups as children and people with disabilities. All those often require appropriate multilateral agreements or arrangements to ensure that they are effectively addressed.

Never since the end of the Second World War has multilateral cooperation become such a necessary means for resolving international disputes and for ensuring the well-being of people everywhere. Sierra Leone, therefore, attaches the utmost importance to the strengthening of multilateral cooperation, as reflected by such recent conferences as the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Those provide effective platforms for articulating the interests of all States and for devising common strategies to address collectively problems that would otherwise overwhelm the capacities of individual countries or regions.

It is, therefore, self-evident that we must continue to pursue the multilateral approach to those and other international issues. The consequences of diminishing or bypassing the multilateral approach in matters that affect the lives of millions of people worldwide could, I should emphasize, be disastrous for us all.

Two years ago, in the Millennium Declaration, heads of State and Government, in the spirit of interdependence, made a commitment to work together in achieving specific goals in areas such as peace, security and disarmament, human rights, good governance and poverty eradication. Those goals are all underpinned by a strong belief in the principles of multilateral cooperation and shared interests.

Of special significance to us are the commitments made by the world leaders in the Millennium Declaration to meet the special needs of Africa. That is not only because Africa has the largest number of countries classified as least developed, and in which almost half the population lives in abject poverty. It is also because we have all benefited and stand to benefit from each other's resources.

In spite of its current level of overall development, Africa has a lot to offer to the rest of the world. Of course, we Africans realize our responsibility, first and foremost, to develop and implement strategies for improving the quality of life of our people and for strengthening our capacity to contribute more effectively to the economies of our partners in the developed world.

In effect, that is what the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is all about — partnership among African countries, partnership with the rest of the world and progress for all mankind. It is

in that context that the conclusions reached at the high-level meeting of the Assembly earlier this week on ways and means of supporting NEPAD assume supreme importance for my country.

In a similar vein, Sierra Leone also welcomes the commitment of the eight major industrialized countries, the G-8, at their recent meeting in Canada, to provide strong support to NEPAD and to establish enhanced partnerships with African countries whose performance reflects the NEPAD commitments. Sierra Leone, for its part, is determined to pursue vigorously the objectives set out in NEPAD, not just because we need donor assistance at this time, but more so because we believe in the soundness of those objectives as a vehicle for the eradication of extreme poverty, the achievement of sustainable development and the assumption of greater responsibility for our own destiny.

I began by assuring the Assembly that I came this time with one overwhelming feeling, a feeling of joy over recent developments in my country. Of course, the search for sustainable peace with justice and national reconciliation is a continuous process, and we are well aware of the challenges that we still have to face. However, I can say with confidence that what we have so far achieved, with the support of the United Nations and the international community, has provided the momentum for us to meet those challenges.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I wish to make a very brief announcement. As announced in today's Journal, the General Assembly will consider this afternoon, immediately upon conclusion of the general debate, the report of the General Committee, contained in document A/57/250, as well as the request for the inclusion of an additional sub-item of the agenda of the fifty-seventh session, contained in document A/57/231.

Address by Mr. Askar Akayev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Askar Akayev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Askar Akayev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Askar Akayev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Akayev (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the lofty post of President of this representative world forum and to wish you every success in your work. Your election as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly is symbolic not only of the personal respect you hold, but also of the authority your country enjoys in the world community. In recent decades, the Czech Republic has been through some hard times. Because of that, you well understand the problems of Kyrgyzstan, which is going through a transition from its authoritarian past to a democratic future.

I take this opportunity to thank Mr. Han Seung-soo for his excellent work as the President of the previous session. The present session is significant in that the Swiss Confederation and, soon, the Democratic Republic of East Timor will have become Members of the United Nations. We warmly welcome the representatives of those countries, who are participating in this session of the General Assembly.

This is my first address from the rostrum of the General Assembly as President of the sovereign Kyrgyz Republic. 11 years have passed since the State of Kyrgyzstan declared its independence. What has brought me to the Assembly is my desire to share with you my thoughts on the most pressing problems of our national development.

First, I would like to refer to the International Year of Mountains, which is being celebrated this year pursuant to a resolution adopted at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. It was proclaimed at the initiative of Kyrgyzstan and other mountainous countries, for which the problem of

the development of mountainous areas is of crucial importance. We are very grateful for the support given to that initiative. Thanks to the efforts of the United Nations, important events have already taken place at the regional and national levels. The outcome of the work done will be discussed at the Global Mountain Summit, to be held in our capital, Bishkek, at the end of October. We will create the most favourable conditions for its work, in the best tradition of Kyrgyz warmth and hospitality.

I believe the delegates present in the Hall will agree that among the many complex challenges facing the world community, the most pressing problems are developing democracy and guaranteeing human rights and freedoms. Those goals have been made a top priority in the Kyrgyz Republic since the earliest days of its establishment.

We are convinced that in modern day conditions, unless there is consistent democratization and human emancipation, progress and prosperity cannot be achieved. However, the remnants of the authoritarian Soviet heritage still has a tenacious hold on the minds of our people, especially among the elderly. There is good reason why former Soviet States are referred to in international classifications as transitional countries. Our experience has shown that the process of transition is particularly difficult not only in the area of the economy but in the minds of people.

On our road towards democracy, we have experienced both joyful success and bitter failure. When we analysed our failures, we came to understand that their main cause was a lack of democracy. In order to give the development of democracy a new and powerful impetus, I as President proclaimed a new national idea: Kyrgyzstan, a country of human rights. We intend to elaborate a democratic code and to establish a council for democratic security. Recently, in order to further the process of democratization, I took the decision to reform our Constitution and to convene a Constitutional Assembly. During my stay in the United States, the Constitutional Assembly is at the concluding stage of its work. The difficulty is that society has different approaches for developing democracy. Some forces claiming to be ardent supporters of democracy consider the essence of democracy to be the destruction of existing structures and the undertaking of new experiments. That would cause the transition from authoritarianism to democracy to take a very long time, indeed, while people have long awaited stability. On behalf of the people of Kyrgyzstan, I would like to assure the world community that we adhere to the principles of democracy and will confidently follow that path despite the difficulties and obstacles that we encounter.

I consider the problem of poverty eradication to be as important as the problem of the development of democracy. The problem has worsened under present conditions in the post-Soviet period. We are not the only poor country in the world. There are many reasons for this, and I do not intend to analyse them in my statement. Poverty has a negative impact on people's morale and creates many obstacles to developing the democratic process. Moreover, poverty is a breeding ground for extremism and international terrorism.

The world community has repeatedly declared its resolve to help countries in need to overcome poverty. Mr. George Bush, the President of the United States, promised to substantially increase assistance to poor countries when he announced the creation of the Millennium Challenge Account. We are grateful for every initiative of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme and other international organizations, as well as of donor countries, for their assistance to poor countries. However, those efforts are still not sufficient.

Following the example of my colleagues from other poor countries, I would like to call upon the world community not to slacken its efforts in the campaign against poverty and to find new resources and new approaches in solving this problem. That would help reduce pockets of instability, encourage the development of democracy and have a positive impact on the world's development as a whole.

I would like to refer to the problem of international terrorism, which is the main danger to the world. New York, where the Assembly is now gathered, was witness to a terrible tragedy which showed the horrendous, brute face of terrorism. The Kyrgyz Republic, which in past years experienced incursions into its territory by international terrorist groups, has strongly supported the call of the President of the United States of America, Mr. George Bush, to create an anti-terrorism coalition. Together with Russia and our other partners and allies, Kyrgyzstan joined the campaign against the horrendous, bestial face of terrorism. We very much appreciate the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council,

and I assure you that Kyrgyzstan will extend all possible assistance to the Committee in its work.

At the global, regional and national levels, Kyrgyzstan is actively participating in the struggle against international terrorism. We have put our territory at the disposition of the military forces of the anti-terrorism coalition. In December of last year, our capital, Bishkek, hosted an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to strengthen comprehensive efforts to fight international terrorism. A Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at that time established a firm foundation for action at the global level.

Mr. Noboa Bejarano (Ecuador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Anti-terrorism centres have been established within the framework of the Shanghai Organization of Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty, Collective Rapid Deployment Forces have been established with headquarters in Bishkek.

However, there are still many unresolved issues confronting the anti-terrorist coalition in Afghanistan, where, until recently, the main redoubt of international terrorism was located. On 23 September I will be meeting with President George Bush in the White House. I believe that the question of our cooperation in the struggle against terrorism will be a top priority. I intend to assure the President of the United States that Kyrgyzstan, acting together with Russia and our other partners, will discharge its responsibility.

One of the most important points of my statement to the General Assembly is to draw the Assembly's attention to a major event in the Kyrgyz Republic. I am referring to the fact that, next year, in 2003, our people will be celebrating the 2,200th anniversary of Kyrgyz Statehood. Taking into account the wishes of wide segments of our society, I, as President, issued an edict proclaiming 2003 the year of Kyrgyz Statehood.

For the newly independent States that emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union, a search for our historic and ethnic roots has become a vital task. I am sure that, at the dawn of their independence, many States that are now represented in the United Nations experienced the same desire. Research carried out by our historians and a study of the works of well-known orientalists have led us to the conclusion the formation of the first Kyrgyz State took place at the end of the third century B. C. This has been convincingly borne out by ancient Chinese chronicles. The famous Chinese chronicler Sima Qian, who is considered to be the Chinese Herodotus, drew up a chronicle in verse about the existence in far-off times of a Kyrgyz State in the form of a Kyrgyz princedom. That State flourished at certain periods and at others merely smouldered. But national Statehood was carried forward by the Kyrgyz people for many centuries up to the end of the twentieth century, when it took the form of the Kyrgyz Republic, which later became a Member of the United Nations.

I would like to remind the Assembly that, in 1995, the Kyrgyz people celebrated a great event, namely, the one thousandth anniversary of our great work of folk literature, the heroic epic *Manas*. We are very grateful to the United Nations for the decision it took at the time to give that event international resonance. The celebration in Kyrgyzstan of the one thousandth anniversary of the *Manas* epic took place with great enthusiasm. That contributed to an unprecedented revival of national spirit and to the unity of our people.

From this rostrum, I wish to address the Secretary-General Kofi Annan and all the delegations participating in the work of the current session to ask them to adopt a decision to recognize as a great historic event in the life our country the 2,200th anniversary of Kyrgyz Statehood, and to give it international status. That would be accepted by my people with profound gratitude. It would also do much to promote domestic stability and further consolidate the multi-ethnic nature of my nation. In cooperation with other delegations, my delegation will submit an appropriate draft resolution on this subject that I, as President of Kyrgyzstan, would ask the Assembly to support.

Kyrgyzstan's cooperation with the United Nations is multilateral in nature. It encompasses a wide spectrum of problems of interest to us all. We have received unwavering support and assistance from the United Nations and its specialized agencies at every stage of our development since the proclamation of State independence. I should like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude for that assistance. I also wish to proclaim from this rostrum that Kyrgyzstan will in the future remain firmly committed to the purposes and principles of the

Organization, and that we will do whatever we can to make them a reality.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Kyrgyz Republic for the statement he has just made.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency The Right Honourable Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

His Excellency The Right Honourable Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): It is an honour for me to address the General Assembly on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Swaziland. I bring with me the warm greetings and best wishes of His Majesty King Mswati III, Her Majesty the Indlovukazi, the Government and the whole Swazi nation to all members of the United Nations family.

The Kingdom of Swaziland joined the rest of the world in sadness to commemorate the first anniversary of the monstrous acts that took place in September last year. Our hearts once again reached out to all those who suffered on that fateful day here in New York and elsewhere in the United States, and to all those whose lives have been affected by subsequent events around the world.

In the aftermath of 11 September, the world is understandably preoccupied with the question of security and the war against terror. The Kingdom of Swaziland reiterates its strong commitment to do all in its power to support the global alliance against terrorism, and is determined to ensure that no aspect of terrorism, including its financing and organization, may be permitted to take root within our borders.

The progress made in some areas of Africa is part of a general trend of optimism that is spreading among all the countries on our continent. We cannot deny that there remain many serious challenges to address, both in terms of conflict situations and in terms of overall development. We have placed our trust in the African Union to be the vehicle for this shift away from the underdevelopment of the past, and the Kingdom of Swaziland looks forward to working with its fellow members to make the new body one that will truly address the challenges and make a real difference in the lives of our peoples.

Of crucial importance to the success of the African Union is the role of the developed world in living up to its commitments to the continent and to all in the developing world.

The Kingdom of Swaziland continues to develop peacefully and quietly, according to the aspirations and expectations of its people. Our relationship with the international community remains founded on the principles of peaceful coexistence with all, on the resolution of all disputes through peaceful dialogue, and on mutual respect and due regard for the sovereignty of independent nations. We value our membership in the United Nations and other international, regional and subregional organizations. Our cooperation and friendship with other countries of the world give us an important instrument through which we can address our national economic, social and humanitarian concerns. Of particular importance are our access to international markets for our goods and the attraction of foreign direct investment: both are central to our efforts to improve our economy and to provide jobs for our people.

Poverty alleviation remains our number-one priority. Sixty-six per cent of our people are living below the internationally recognized poverty line, and yet our classification as a lower-middle-income country denies us many of the funds and resources that are available to those in other categories. We will be working with the United Nations to ensure that that situation is corrected.

In the meantime, we are focusing all our efforts and available resources on programmes that meet the challenge of poverty in a sustainable and equitable manner. Our national development strategy, which is the result of direct consultation with the people themselves, provides us with a blueprint for Government action and conforms precisely to the principles of Agenda 21.

Despite all our best efforts and our limited success in many areas, we are restricted in our capacity to meet our objectives, not only by our lack of access to development funds, but also by a multitude of problems that are affecting us simultaneously and that we cannot overcome on our own. As is the case with all developing countries, we are particularly at risk in times of global economic difficulties and are especially vulnerable to disease and to the effects of changing weather patterns.

Overshadowing all our development challenges, however, is the threat posed by multiple health risks, including malaria and tuberculosis, but especially HIV/AIDS. AIDS continues to claim the lives of huge numbers of Swazis, and no family in our Kingdom has escaped the deadly touch of that disease. No sector of development is immune from the consequences of the very high and increasing HIV infection rates among our people, with enormous strain placed on our financial and human resources in the battle to cope.

We are trying our best in the light of our limited resources. A national emergency response committee on HIV/AIDS has been established to provide the focus for our efforts. We are attacking the enemy on various fronts, with priority placed on prevention, care, counselling and treatment. Perhaps the greatest tragedy is the effect on children who have lost their parents to the disease. We are battling to provide those unfortunate orphans with the means to continue normal lives, especially with regard to food, clothing and schooling.

We are ready to embrace approved strategies of medical care, including those that reduce mother-to-child transmission of the virus, and the prescription of anti-retrovirals for those who need them. However, the simple fact is that we cannot afford those costly drugs, and we must rely on the sympathy and support of others. That is why the Kingdom was encouraged by the expressions of commitment at last year's AIDS Summit and by the creation of the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. With our hopes high for support from the Fund, it came as a grave disappointment to our people that our application to the Fund earlier this year had been rejected and that the criteria for selection of projects had become unclear. We earnestly hope that our second application will meet with approval and that international support from that resource, and from those of all who pledged their solemn commitments, may at last be forthcoming to help us in this national disaster.

In the meantime, we look to our own resources to fight the battle. One answer lies in the rediscovery of practices that are within our own traditions and culture. We have resurrected the rites of chastity and respect for self that served our people well for many generations in the past, and these are finding increasing acceptance in our nation, especially among the younger generation.

As we announced last year, His Majesty has also reached out to the international entertainment community for support, and we have been overwhelmed by the positive and heart-warming response. Next month will see the release of an album of music from international artists, entitled "Songs for Life", whose proceeds will go entirely to HIV/AIDS programmes in southern Africa. We look forward with great confidence to the success of the album, with its aims of promoting global awareness of the crisis in many countries and of raising funds on a scale that will help those of us most affected to cope with its dreadful consequences.

At precisely this moment of maximum disadvantage, the Kingdom of Swaziland and others in the southern African region have been hit hard by food shortages that are affecting 21 per cent of our people, largely as a result of lack of rain. We have been warned that the situation will deteriorate further next season with the likely advent of the El Niño effect. Furthermore, the food security situation has been exacerbated by other problems, such as the lack of clean drinking water in rural areas and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS-related illnesses and deaths, which leave families with severely diminished resources to meet their basic needs.

Using our scarce resources, we are making every effort to help our people, and we have made one of our top priorities the construction of dams throughout the rural areas, where the crisis is the most serious. The Kingdom of Swaziland is grateful to the Secretary-General and to the United Nations agencies for their efforts to address those problems through the launching of a United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal in response to the humanitarian crisis in southern Africa. We are grateful for the response to the Appeal, and we hope for increased support as the famine tightens its grip on us.

We appreciate the direct involvement of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on the humanitarian crisis in our region, Mr. James Morris, and we look forward to working with him, and with all our international friends and partners, who have already been so generous with emergency food aid, to make it through this latest crisis for the Swazi nation.

The review of the Kingdom's constitution continues, and the drafting stage is almost complete. The next phase will be the people's review of the draft document to ensure that their wishes have been met. That will be the final stage before the document is formally adopted. We trust that the international community will respect the fact that this final document, the product of extensive consultation with the whole nation, will be the true expression of the wishes of the people themselves, and will serve the Kingdom of Swaziland well for many generations to come. We are grateful to all who have supported us in this nation-building exercise.

The Kingdom of Swaziland would like to extend a warm welcome to the United Nations newest Member, Switzerland, and soon-to-be Member East Timor. There now remains just one group of people that is denied the opportunity to participate in the activities of the United Nations and its associated agencies. I refer here to the 23 million inhabitants of the Republic of China on Taiwan, a sovereign State and a constructive member of the international community.

These 23 million people have shown time and again that they are willing and able to contribute to the international community. At this critical time in the history of the world, which is faced with the challenges of instability, under-development and economic difficulties, we cannot afford to exclude from our joint efforts the resources and skills of the Republic of China on Taiwan. As a democratic, prosperous and peace-loving nation, Taiwan has displayed her readiness to assist the development challenges of her friends and partners, and has intervened in humanitarian crises across the globe. Taiwan needs the United Nations, and the United Nations needs Taiwan. We therefore appeal once more to our fellow Members to recognize the right of the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to representation in the United Nations system, and to take the appropriate measures to achieve this objective.

We are living in dangerous times. Global tension and the possibility of wide-scale conflict threaten all the hopes for a century of peace, stability and sustainable development that were expressed at our Millennium Summit just two short years ago.

Our strength as an Organization depends on consultation and consensus among all Member States in matters that affect the whole world. The summits and special sessions that we all attend at great cost are valuable only insofar as we carry through the resolutions we arrive at and the commitments we make.

The Kingdom of Swaziland believes that the fundamental principles on which the United Nations was founded still present the best and only chance for humankind to live and work in harmony with one another.

The Kingdom of Swaziland here reaffirms her full commitment to the founding Charter of our Organization and offers her fullest support to all its activities that have as their aim to make this world of ours safer, more equal and healthier for all its people. We look forward to working with the United Nations and her associated agencies in the coming year, to help us to meet the development challenges of our people.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Her Excellency Mrs. Kristiina Ojuland.

Mrs. Ojuland (Estonia): Let me begin by welcoming the United Nations new Member, Switzerland who has always been devoted to the cause of the United Nations and has now finally decided to join us. I look forward to welcoming East Timor as the newest Member of the Organization in the very near future. I would also like to pass on my congratulations to the newly elected President of the General Assembly.

Today I would like to address three subjects of major concern for our globalizing world: the struggle against terrorism, human trafficking, and sustainable development.

A year ago today, the whole world was still recoiling from the horrendous terrorist attacks in the United States. Immediately after the terror attacks, most States, including Estonia, and almost all international organizations expressed their solidarity with the United States.

We also associated ourselves with the North Atlantic Council's statement of 12 September 2001, which invoked article 5 of the Washington Treaty, as well as with relevant European Union statements and undertakings.

Estonia is actively participating in the international coalition to combat terrorism. We have contributed a search and rescue team to Operation Enduring Freedom under United States leadership. Our highly trained explosives detection dog team is presently serving in Afghanistan alongside the forces of the other countries, which are helping to restore order in that war-torn land.

We appreciate the noteworthy role of the United Nations and its Security Council in the universal campaign against terrorism. We fully recognize the importance of preventive measures and further standard-setting in this field. To date, not a single crime that could be classified as terrorism has been committed in Estonia. However, let me assure you that Estonia will continue to make all efforts necessary to fulfil its role in this ongoing quest for comprehensive international security.

Indeed, I can announce for the record that Estonia has ratified all the relevant United Nations conventions and has promptly presented reports to the appropriate parties about the implementation of the various Security Council resolutions.

We are confident that truly joint efforts, which make use of the input of all States, will eventually enable the international community to make remarkable progress in the global struggle against terrorism. In this regard, cooperation to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is of particular significance, since sooner or later, terrorists might actually gain access to these ghastly tools of doom.

Today, the United Nations faces the challenge of upholding its authority. For the sake of our future, and the prestige and relevancy of the United Nations, it is essential that the United Nations does not shy away from reacting effectively and decisively when confronted with real and formidable dangers. Full and unconditional implementation of Security Council resolutions is obligatory for all Members, just as is the effective enforcement of these resolutions.

Therefore, we value highly the decisiveness of the international community to implement the resolutions dealing with Iraq. Estonia supports the Secretary-General's further efforts to obtain Iraq's compliance with the Security Council resolutions. The return of the United Nations weapons inspectors to Iraq is just a beginning. Further acts will have to follow.

The President returned to the Chair.

The possible results of international indecisiveness and appeasement are well illustrated by the history of the League of Nations, which disappeared from the international arena, just as did some of its member States, including my homeland, Estonia. The result was an international conflagration that left a large part of the civilized world in ruins, the very ruins upon which the United Nations Organization was founded. This taught us all a very essential lesson — inaction can often be much more disastrous than action.

Another important issue which deserves to be touched upon here is human trafficking, in particular trafficking in women. The Estonian Government recently acceded to the three Protocols additional to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. In June 2001, at the Women and Democracy Conference in Lithuania, the Nordic and Baltic Ministers for Gender Equality decided to launch a joint Nordic-Baltic information campaign against trafficking in women.

The aim of the campaign, which will continue at least until the beginning of 2003, is to turn the general public's attention to the problems of prostitution and trafficking in people and to initiate public discussion about the problems surrounding the issue of trafficking in women. The joint campaign is being carried out simultaneously in the eight Nordic and Baltic countries, with all relevant institutions concentrating, throughout this year, on the matter of how best to combat this problem. We hope that we will soon have some concrete proposals for drafting amendments to appropriate national legislation.

The problem of trafficking in women, however, is part of a broader series of issues relating to women, including their position in society, their participation in the decision-making process and so on. In order to discuss all of these topics in depth and to highlight

women's role in democratic societies, Estonia will host, in February 2003, a major international conference on women and democracy. I sincerely hope that that conference will help to further the cause of women's rights.

Another crucial issue on the global agenda, and the last topic that I wish to speak about, is development cooperation and sustainable development. Having participated in the Monterrey discussions, and in the wake of the Johannesburg Conference, I would like to emphasize that the most important factor for sustained and sustainable development is a clear national goal and a road map for achieving it. Estonia is in the process of drafting a special sustainable development strategy, a process involving the cooperation of both civil society and the private sector.

Estonia acknowledges the problem of environmental deterioration, and we have taken action to tackle it. Estonia has ratified the Kyoto Protocol — among many other international and regional agreements concerning the environment — and we will do our best to fully implement the decisions made in Johannesburg.

Since the successful implementation of recent international decisions depends largely on the concerted action of the various parties, communication and access to information are becoming key issues. Bridging the digital divide between the haves and the have-nots is essential if we want all countries to benefit equally from globalization. Thanks to our rapid rate of progress, Estonia has been able to support development in various other countries.

The creation of an e-governance academy in Estonia — a cooperative effort involving the Estonian Government, the United Nations Development Programme and the Open Society Institute — is a significant step towards bridging the digital gap with the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia. The academy will also be open to other interested regions. The academy will draw on the experiences gained in various environments, thereby providing broad knowledge that will enable participants to choose or create the best solution for their particular situation. Among other things, this project demonstrates the synergy that can be created from cooperation between Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Today I have spoken about some of the issues on the global agenda, all of which have been discussed at length at recent international meetings and conferences. Those discussions provided us with useful signposts, agreements and decisions. Now it is time to implement them.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Rashid Abdullah Al-Noaimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Noaimi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour, on behalf of my country, the United Arab Emirates, to extend to you, Sir, and to your friendly country, the Czech Republic, our congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. We are confident that your great skill and diplomatic experience in international affairs will assist you in achieving the goals of this session. We wish you and the members of the Bureau great success.

I also would like to thank your predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his effective leadership during the previous session.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome and congratulate the Swiss Confederation on becoming a Member of the United Nations. We also look forward to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste soon joining the Organization, which will enhance its universality.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his wise leadership and his tireless efforts to enhance the role of the United Nations in maintaining peace, security and stability in the world.

The States of the world are gathered here today at the beginning of a new session of the General Assembly, hopeful of reaching more effective and transparent solutions to the world's problems, based on fairness and justice, and of establishing peace in the world, which is experiencing instability and an imbalance in international relations.

In addition to civil and regional wars, more than half of the world's population is suffering from poverty, famine, epidemics and fatal diseases. Some countries are still occupying the territory of others. This is creating tension and instability in many regions of the world, which is endangering regional and international peace and security.

As the international community faces an increasing number of challenges, we are becoming more aware of the importance of complying with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of respecting the sovereignty of international law in resolving, by peaceful means, disputes, conflict and instances of occupation.

In this age of globalization and rapid development in information and communication technologies, the world has become a small village that can be reached from anywhere. The different interests of the world's nations have become intertwined more than ever. Thus the problems and sufferings of other peoples cannot be ignored because of geographical distances or differences of culture, civilization and beliefs.

The current events in the world prove, without a doubt, that the outcomes of conflicts and wars and the problems of poverty, drug abuse and disease extend beyond their geographical borders, reaching secure regions and threatening their stability. For that reason, the establishment of international peace and security in the world is the joint responsibility of all Governments and nations, of their public as well as private institutions. The dire need for a global partnership, working under the umbrella of the United Nations with a view to creating a comprehensive and calculated strategy that takes into consideration international law, human and cultural values and people's needs and suffering can never be overestimated.

The United Arab Emirates is well aware of the strategic importance of the Arabian Gulf region, and it is aware that the security of the Arabian Gulf cannot be separated from international peace and security. Furthermore, the United Arab Emirates, guided by the wise leadership of His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, the President of the country, believes in solving disputes by peaceful means, based on the principles of the United Nations Charter and the provisions of international law. On that basis, the United Arab Emirates calls upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to solve the issue of its occupation of the three islands, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Moussa, through bilateral talks or through the International Court of Justice. We also reaffirm that the United Arab Emirates has complete sovereignty over these three islands, including their air space, their regional waters, the continental shelf and the economic region related to them, as they are an indivisible part of the United Arab Emirates.

The United Arab Emirates has more than once shown good will and a serious desire to reach a peaceful solution to the issue of the three islands. This was done through two visits by his Highness, Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, representing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to Tehran, in addition to mutual visits made by the two parties. The United Arab Emirates hopes that those visits will contribute to bringing both parties closer and to reaching a peaceful solution for the three islands. This will reinforce the principle of security and of regional and international peace. In addition, it will affirm the principle of dialogue, peaceful coexistence, trust and good neighbourliness.

We have witnessed, during this session, new and encouraging developments regarding the Iraqi issue and the security and stability of the region. The United Arab Emirates welcomes Iraq's acceptance of the return of the United Nations inspectors, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. This decision will spare Iraq and the region untold tragedies and catastrophes. We look forward to real cooperation, one built on the United Nations Charter and international resolutions, in order to reach stability and cooperation among the States of the region and to resolve all remaining problems that hinder trust, stability and collaboration among the different parties. We call upon the international community to support the Iraqi decision, to exert greater efforts to solve the pending issues between Iraq and the United Nations, and to lift the sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people and under which they have suffered for 12 years. We welcome, furthermore, the positive attitude expressed by Iraq towards returning the Kuwaiti national archives and properties. We urge it to show more goodwill and take more effective steps by freeing the Kuwaiti prisoners of war and those of third countries, returning the rest of the Kuwaiti properties, respecting the sovereignty of Kuwait and not interfering in Kuwait's internal affairs.

We also reiterate the United Arab Emirates' position with regard to the resolution adopted by the Arab Summit in Beirut in March 2002. This resolution rejects the use of force or the threat to use it, along with any military attack against Iraq. This position aims to protect the region from another unnecessary war. We reiterate, furthermore, the importance of

securing the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

The United Arab Emirates is very concerned about the dangerous events in the occupied Palestinian territories. We express our sympathy and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their ordeal. We also denounce all acts of aggression committed by the occupying Israeli forces, and we demand that the international community, in particular the large influential countries, the United States of America and the European Union, compel Israel to end immediately all acts of murder, destruction, closure and displacement of the Palestinian people.

The United Arab Emirates renews its support of the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital. Accordingly, we reaffirm our support of the Arab peace initiative that was endorsed at the Beirut Summit. This initiative comprises a process for a just and comprehensive settlement that ensures the rights of both parties. Such a position was expressed by United States President George W. Bush in a speech calling for the creation of a Palestinian State.

We also call upon Israel to end its continuous violations of the agreements it made within the framework of the peace process and to resume peace talks in accordance with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 181 (1947), 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), and 425 (1978). These call for Israel's withdrawal from the Palestinian occupied lands, including the city of Jerusalem, to the 1967 borders, from the Syrian Golan Heights to the line set before 4 June 1967 and from the Lebanese Shabaa farms, and for the dismantling of all settlements in occupied Palestinian and Arab lands and for the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland.

Maintaining peace and security in the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf region depends, to a great extent, on applying a more comprehensive and transparent concept that entails the removal of weapons of mass destruction. The fact that Israel has these weapons, including nuclear weapons, is a direct threat to regional and international security. Accordingly, we again urge the international community and relevant international organizations to pressure Israel, by all means possible, to abandon its nuclear weapons and to subject its nuclear facilities to the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency. This proposal aims to establish a nuclear-free zone, along with a zone that is free of weapons of mass destruction, in the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf, similar to other regions in the world.

The United Arab Emirates watches with great concern the escalation in tensions between India and Pakistan. We call upon these two countries to deal with their disputes in a spirit of joint political responsibility that ensures the security of the region and the world. We ask them to resume bilateral negotiations to resolve their standing disputes peacefully in order to maintain regional and international peace and security. International terrorism is a direct threat to the stability of nations and to international peace and the world economy. In denouncing all acts of terrorism, regardless of their motives and sources, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms its commitment to relevant United Nations resolutions on terrorism. It renews its call for an international conference on terrorism to reach a clear definition of terrorism based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and regional and international treaties, conventions and covenants.

Political and historical events have proven that economic deterioration, poverty, lack of water, debts and foreign occupation pose dangerous threats to life resources and the security of human beings. They are a main cause of conflicts, violence, ethnic cleansing and instability. On that basis, the leaders of the world insisted, in the Plan of Implementation and the Political Declaration of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, on the common and differentiated responsibility to solve these problems and on the importance of providing the financial resources to achieve the goals of economic, social and environmental development to eradicate poverty, raise standards of living and achieve global economic development.

The United Arab Emirates calls on the Governments of the developed countries to honour the commitments they made in Johannesburg — especially with respect to the developing and least developed countries, as specified in the recommendations emanating from the Summit — and in particular the financial resolutions requiring the developed countries to contribute 0.7 per cent of their national production to help poor, developing States to implement development programmes in their countries.

We call upon Governments and relevant organizations to comply with resolutions relevant to sustainable development. The United Arab Emirates has consistently initiated and provided development, financial and humanitarian assistance to many countries, especially developing countries, that suffer from civil and regional wars and natural disasters. We also call upon the international financial institutions to adopt more balanced and fair financial policies to alleviate the developing countries' external debt burden. This would give them the opportunity to participate in formulating decision-making policies relevant to the environment and sustainable development and to help them join the global market, thus reviving and enhancing their national economies. They would thereby become productive members of the international community, effectively promoting the stability of international economic relations.

Finally, we hope that the debates on the items on the agenda of this session will achieve positive and concrete results, enhancing the role of the Organization in maintaining international peace and security and making the world a better place for human society.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Gambia, His Excellency Mr. Baboucarr-Blaise Ismaila Jagne.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): Let me first congratulate Mr. Kavan on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session and for the excellent manner in which he has been presiding over our deliberations since the beginning of the session. With the calibre of leadership he has displayed, added to his vast experience and wisdom, I have no doubt that our deliberations will be easily guided to a successful outcome.

Let me also express my delegation's thanks and appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his efficiency and effectiveness in conducting the business of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

I would be remiss if I did not pay homage to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for another year of fine stewardship of our Organization and of humanity at large. Thanks to his leadership, our Organization has been able to cross a number of important frontiers in the year since we last met.

Lastly, my delegation warmly congratulates East Timor on its full transition to democracy, its successful conduct of democratic elections, its recent accession to independence and its subsequent admission into our United Nations family. Our congratulations also go to the Government and people of Switzerland on acceding to full membership of the United Nations as the 190th and newest Member State.

Our session is being convened at a time when the anniversary of the dastardly 11 September attack on the United States is being observed. We join the rest of the world, including the families of the victims, in remembering those who lost their lives and we pray that almighty God grant them eternal rest. Gambians were among the thousands from many nations of the world who were victims of the attack. This only goes to show that terrorism knows no national boundaries. In commemorating 11 September, President Jammeh declared a public holiday for people to stay home and pray. We must therefore harness all our efforts and cooperate effectively to address this wicked phenomenon and its root causes.

Let me take this opportunity to commend the Counter-Terrorism Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) for the good work that it is doing in enhancing cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism. In the course of this year, the Gambia was able to accede to all the major treaties relating to terrorism and we are currently in the process of implementing resolution 1373 (2001).

The year 2002 has been a busy one for us all. First, we came here for the special session on children. Then, we went off to Monterrey for the International Conference on Financing for Development, and we just recently concluded our deliberations on sustainable development in Johannesburg, South Africa. At each of these important forums, we were offered the opportunity of rededicating ourselves to the noble objectives of our Organization, especially those that were so strongly evinced at the Millennium Summit and enshrined in the millennium development goals, which we all espoused.

Through our deliberations at these meetings in the course of this year, we have recommitted ourselves to striving in a more purposeful and determined manner to spread and deepen democracy throughout the world; do better in protecting human rights, fundamental human freedoms and the rule of law; strengthen our

cooperation in the fight against hunger, poverty and disease; do more to protect the weak and vulnerable in our respective societies, particularly children, the aged and the handicapped; and redouble our efforts to sanitize and preserve the physical and human ecology and environment. These are some of the important pillars on which world peace and security are built and which we must consciously work to strengthen and preserve from crumbling. That is the only sure way that global security and development, which are at the core of our Organization's mandate, can be assured.

We in the Gambia have been doing all we can to stay the course in the uphill task of nation-building under the inspired and dynamic leadership of President Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh. In the area of good governance, I am pleased to inform this body that, with special reference to the democratization process, following the much-acclaimed presidential elections held last October, National Assembly elections were held on 17 January and local Government elections on 25 April 2002. Mindful of the need to cultivate the culture of democracy and good governance, the Government of the Gambia has since developed and adopted a national governance policy and programme.

The main components of the policy framework are constitutional review and reform of electoral processes; enhancing parliamentary structures and processes; civic education; reform of legal and judicial processes and constitutional review; public sector management and administrative reform; and decentralization and reform of local Government systems. Clearly, governance constitutes an important component of our poverty reduction strategy.

Halfway through the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, and in spite of all the commitments we have made over the years to reduce poverty and to accelerate the pace of social and economic development throughout the world, the gap between the rich and the poor is widening and the absolute number of poor people, especially in the developing world, is increasing. The scourge of poverty is insidious. It contains within itself all the elements that militate against its victim's ability to rise above his or her condition.

Therefore, fighting poverty calls for conscious, deliberate interventions that only the strong can provide to help the weak. These interventions come, for the most part, in the form of resource flows. Unfortunately, these have been dwindling over the years and, in spite of the recent commitments made by the G8 countries in Kananaskis in support of the new African initiative — the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), for which we are grateful — overall, the shortfalls in the fight against poverty are still huge and growing.

The President returned to the Chair.

The international community should not lead African countries to disenchantment. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative is, for the most part, still good only on paper, largely speaking. Protectionist policies and heavy subsidies continue to frustrate our efforts to earn a decent living through production and trade. And the promises of increased official development assistance and other forms of assistance over four United Nations Development Decades have remained largely unfulfilled. In fact, this session of the General Assembly will look into the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, and the main conclusion will be that, by and large, the commitments made by Africa's development partners have not been met. We missed another opportunity for the multilateral system to work towards poverty eradication and social and economic development.

With special reference to the plight of least developed countries, I would like to add the Gambia's voice to those of previous speakers in calling for a renewed commitment to implementing the programme of action for the least developed countries for the decade 2001-2010. In that connection, we commend the General Assembly for the decision taken to establish the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. We look forward to working closely with the High Representative.

The recently held ministerial meeting of least developed countries in Cotonou was indeed timely, and we call on the rest of the international community to lend its full support to the least developed countries so that we implement fully the decisions taken. We cannot, however, discuss the issue of poverty alleviation without mentioning the problem of women and children. With regard to our women folk, we need to focus more on the 12 critical areas of concern laid out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,

including gender inequalities. As for the issues concerning children, we hope that the follow-up summit held here in New York recently will strengthen us in our resolve to achieve the noble goals that we have set for ourselves to give our children a brighter future.

For our part, in the Gambia we have evolved a strong and focused policy on poverty, which we have articulated in a programme of action for poverty alleviation. The strategy is anchored on my Government's commitment to eradicate poverty in the long term, by increasing income through economic growth and empowering the population with the capacity for sustainable development. Our fight against poverty stands on five pillars: the creation of an enabling environment for economic growth and development, enhancing the productive capacity and social protection of the poor, improving coverage of basic services, political empowerment of civil society, and strengthened partnerships with development stakeholders. My Government is committed to relentlessly pursuing those objectives in line with the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals. In that, we shall be counting on the wholehearted support of the international community.

At this juncture, I would like to express my Government's most profound gratitude to our principal partners in development and to the donor community at large for their active participation at the sixth Roundtable Donors Conference for the Gambia, held in Geneva on 18 and 19 September 2002. We are confident that all the pledges made will be honoured so that together, in the true spirit of international solidarity, we will implement smoothly and successfully our national programme of action for poverty alleviation.

That is all the more urgent considering the fact that, during the rainy season this year, we experienced a long dry spell initially, resulting in the poor performance of both crops and livestock.

It is our hope that all nations of the world will redouble their efforts to live up to the commitments they made in Rio and, just recently, reaffirmed in Johannesburg. Even as we search for ways of taking our people out of poverty, we should also be mindful of the need to conserve our natural environment.

Of particular concern to my delegation are the destructive fishing practices in the South Atlantic. Despite the adoption of numerous international instruments to regulate fishing with a view to conserving fish stocks, unsustainable and often illegal fishing continues unabated in our coastal waters. The unbridled pursuit of profit without due regard to sustainability and long-term food security is the only reason for that undesirable situation. My delegation therefore calls on all Member States to cooperate with us to address this serious state of affairs and to provide us with technical and other forms of assistance to enable all affected countries to better police their waters in order to arrest those unsustainable and harmful fishing practices.

The momentum generated in Johannesburg must not be allowed to wither away. It must be recognized, however, that there can be no meaningful development without peace and stability. That is why we attach great importance to the issue of peacekeeping.

In the field of peacekeeping, our Organization continues to score remarkable successes. We appreciate the efforts of the Security Council to put in place a rapid response mechanism through which a multinational force could quickly be deployed to any part of the world. However, there is need to ensure that adequate resources are made available so that no peacekeeping operation is disrupted on account of lack of funds, thereby plunging the countries concerned back into a vortex of violence. Funding availability is also important to bridge the gap between peacekeeping and national reconstruction.

The determination with which we have dealt with threats to peace has paid handsome dividends in the period since we last met. That is why we welcome the great efforts made to distinguish the existing conflicts in Africa, especially in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola.

With regard to the Sudan, my Government applauds the signing of the Machacos Protocol between the Government and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). We hope and pray that the process now started will finally bring that protracted conflict to an end.

While we may rightly commend ourselves on those achievements, we must not rest on our oars. There are still some significant areas of uncertainty and volatility in our own West African subregion that we need to address. That requires a relentless effort.

In our capacity as coordinator of the Group of friends of Guinea-Bissau, here at the United Nations, we are calling on the rest of the international community to provide more assistance to that sister country. In that way, the democratization process will be consolidated and the country's economic performance enhanced.

We must bear in mind that ending hostilities is one thing and getting the system on the right path to social and economic development of the type that would eliminate the causes of conflict is quite another. In like manner, a successful transition into a democratic dispensation does not necessarily, in and of itself, usher in peace and security. In many of the countries where conflicts have ended, political stability remains fragile, and uncertainty and instability prevail. In those countries, there is need to go beyond the immediate political requirements for consolidating peace, to address governance in its broadest sense, including its economic and financial aspects, as well as the capacities required for strengthening it. That is the emerging challenge for the international community. We must devise mechanisms for follow-through into peace-building and be ready to provide the resources to progressively restore confidence and strength among those at the frontline.

President Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, the Government and people of the Gambia are fully committed to the search for peace and the resolution of conflicts everywhere, particularly in our immediate subregion. That is why we not only open our doors to our neighbours in distress, hosting many refugees, but we also work actively with them as well as with other members of the international community, including the Secretary-General and his able team to remove misunderstandings that could easily lead to a flare up of conflict.

The situation in the Middle East remains a matter of grave concern to my delegation. The Security Council must show more leadership in the efforts of the international community to contain and resolve the serious tensions between Israel and Palestine, which pose a grave threat to the stability of the nations in the region and the peace of the whole world. It is unacceptable for the world to stand back and watch as helpless civilians are attacked in refugee camps or are killed or maimed by suicide bombers. The suffering of innocent people in the Middle East must be brought to an end immediately.

My delegation strongly urges, therefore, that all the relevant United Nations resolutions on Palestine and the Middle East, notably Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), be complied with without further delay. We also fully support those who have called for the recognition of the State of Israel by all nations, as well as the creation and the recognition by all of a State of Palestine.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, there are still some unresolved issues. The situation between Iraq and Kuwait has still not been fully resolved, and we are still seeking a satisfactory resolution of the question of the Kuwaiti prisoners of war and missing persons, as well as the return of the Kuwaiti national archives.

Within Iraq itself, we in the Gambia have always called for the alleviation of the suffering of the innocent Iraqi people. With regard to the other unfinished business of weapons inspections, my delegation applauds the decision of the Government of Iraq to invite the United Nations weapons inspectors to return to Iraq to resume their work. We have always upheld the view that parties to any dispute should allow the United Nations to assume its responsibility unhindered in our common quest for amicable closure to conflict situations. We therefore note with satisfaction the important statement made by President Bush recognizing the central role of the United Nations and calling on the latter to assume its responsibility. But let us also remember that we, all of us — nations big and small, rich and poor — constitute the United Nations. It can be only what we the Member States want it to be. The choice is ours.

In South Asia, we cannot be indifferent to the prevailing situation between India and Pakistan. Those are two great countries with which the Gambia has always enjoyed excellent relations. We are therefore calling on them, out of that friendship, to exercise restraint at all times and to withdraw their troops from their respective borders.

After years of hard work and tough negotiations, we finally succeeded in establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC), with the entry into force of the Rome Statute. We salute the tireless efforts of all those who contributed in one way or another to that huge success. It is our fervent hope that the Court, with the active collaboration of all like-minded States, will act as an effective instrument in the fight against

international crimes of all sorts and, by extension, extinguish the culture of impunity.

Turning now to the issue of sanctions, my delegation firmly believes that the time has now come for us to review the procedure being used to impose sanctions on countries and individuals. The permanent members of the Security Council, who determine who should be placed on a sanctions or travel ban list, do not usually provide evidence, either to the individual concerned or to his Government, to justify their decision. We have come to see that in many cases, such decisions are based on speculation and conjecture and that the individuals in question really did not deserve to be punished and humiliated. Thus far, most Governments have been very cooperative and, while repeatedly requesting to no avail that evidence of wrong-doing be made known to them, have nonetheless gone along with the rest of the international community in respecting the decision taken by the Council. Some of those Governments, mine included, are reaching the point of exasperation and have resolved that, unless the evidence being requested of the Security Council is provided, they will refuse to comply with any ban or sanctions imposed on their nationals. We sometimes wonder whether someone out there does not have a hidden agenda. As sovereign nations, we demand more transparency before acquiescing to our nationals being punished for wrongdoings that we have not been shown they have committed. The United Nations Security Council must not be a bully.

In like manner, the multifaceted sanctions imposed on Cuba are still in place despite numerous resolutions calling for their removal. A window of opportunity now exists for them to be finally set aside. It is in nobody's interest to continue to pursue policies against Cuba that have lost their appeal.

Sabres are rattling on one side of the Taiwan Strait in the face of 23 million souls, for their merely having claimed their God-given right to be recognized as a political, economic and social entity. The Republic of China on Taiwan is today the only country on earth that is not represented in the United Nations, contrary to the main guiding principle of the United Nations: the principle of universality. Article four of the Charter invites "all ... peace-loving States" to become Members of the Organization. The people of Taiwan have demonstrated over the years not only that they are peace-loving but also that they can contribute to all the objectives of the United Nations in the fields of global security, financial stability, culture, industrial and technological growth and sustainable development. Taiwan is not an insignificant player in the world production and trade arena. It is the world's sixteenth largest economy. It is equally highly developed in the field of scientific and medical research.

In recognition of its importance as a trading nation, it was recently admitted into the World Trade Organization. Logic demands that, for the very same reason, it should also be admitted into the World Health Organization in recognition of its importance as a country of highly sophisticated and developed health services; into the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization because of its exceptionally high standing in the fields of science and culture; into the United Nations Industrial Development Organization because of its most advanced industrial and technological development; into the United Nations Children's Fund because of its highly developed child development policies and programmes; into the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme because of its extremely well developed agriculture and its importance as a food producer; and into the United Nations Development Programme because of its huge official development assistance to developing countries for capacity-building and poverty alleviation. In short, it should be admitted into all branches of the United Nations family because of the tremendous contributions it could make to the ideals and programmes of the United Nations.

Taiwan is a vibrant democracy with high ratings on human rights, press freedom and the observance of the rights of the individual. It could contribute immensely to global security and the fight against terrorism. It is therefore baffling that this highly developed, friendly and peace-loving nation has been barred from membership in the United Nations for purely political reasons. My Government will not rest until this injustice is undone and the Republic of China on Taiwan is granted its rightful place among the comity of nations.

Still in the same region, with regard to the Korean Peninsula, my delegation would like to reiterate once again our unflinching support for all the efforts geared towards peaceful unification.

Finally, my delegation believes that the General Assembly needs to be strengthened so that it could play an even greater role in our quest for a just and equitable world order. We welcome the moves being made to reform this important organ of the United Nations in ways that would render it more effective in discharging its mandate.

This is particularly true of the Security Council. We in the Gambia will continue to add our voice to the clamour for the Security Council to be reformed in order to make it more democratic and more in tune with the realities of and requirements for global security in the twenty-first century. The credibility and relevance of the Security Council now depend on the reforms that we all have been calling for. The developing countries must be allowed a much more effective participation in this powerful organ of the United Nations. Africa should have a minimum of two permanent seats.

In conclusion, we urge all nations, great and small, to work relentlessly towards preserving the ideals for which the Organization was set up. We should all eschew behaviours that undermine the objectives of the United Nations and that frustrate its efforts. Multilateralism is the only hope left to mankind for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the maintenance of international peace and security. Let us cherish and nurture it. Multilateralism will thrive only if there is trust and confidence among all the actors. But a system that repeatedly frustrates and lets down one portion of its membership will malfunction and eventually become ineffective and irrelevant. We must therefore all do more to ensure that such a fate does not befall our Organization.

The Acting President: I would like to take this opportunity to remind speakers of our time limit for statements in the General Assembly, which is 15 minutes.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Tahir Baduri, Chairman of the delegation of Eritrea.

Mr. Baduri (Eritrea): Let me start by congratulating the President on his unanimous election to preside over the fifty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly. His election is an honour to him and to his country, the Czech Republic. The delegation of the State of Eritrea assures you of its full cooperation and support.

Allow me also to extend to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo of the Republic of Korea, my delegation's deep appreciation for a job well done during the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. Profound appreciation is also due to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his tireless efforts to make our United Nations more responsive and effective.

On this happy occasion, my delegation welcomes the Swiss Confederation to the family of nations with great pleasure. We commend the decision taken by the Swiss people in allowing their great country to become a full Member of the United Nations. The same words go to the soon-to-be 191st Member of our Organization, the Democratic Republic of East Timor, a country whose sovereignty and independence has been won with sweat and blood, like that of my own country. Warm welcome from Eritrea, East Timor!

The fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when the wounds and scars from the 11 September terrorist attack one year ago, in three locations over the soil of the United States, are still healing. Grief, pain and anger are still lingering.

At a gathering here at Headquarters this 11 September to commemorate the first anniversary of the attack, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said,

> "On 11 September grief enveloped the world, not only out of solidarity with the people of the United States, but out of shared loss. More than 90 nations lost sons and daughters of their own — murdered that day for no other reason than that they had chosen to live in this country. Today, we come together as a world community because we were attacked as a world community."

The loss of almost 3,000 innocent lives in a single day is so painful. The Eritrean people share the pain and the grief. They reiterate their condolences to those who lost their loved ones, and they stand in solidarity with the American people at this trying time. Indeed, the attacks of 11 September have inevitably changed the way we live and the way we see our world. This day has symbolized the alarm clock that rung around the world to wake us all. My delegation regrets that it took attacks of such magnitude to shake us from our unwatchful sleep.

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon in my country. The State of Eritrea has suffered it since its formal independence, in 1993, as the youngest country in Africa. The Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement and the so-called Eritrean Popular Islamic Conference were created and sponsored by Al Qaeda and other regional and international Islamic groups to perpetrate subversive acts in Eritrea for the last 10 years. In 1994, Eritrean security forces intercepted a mixed group of terrorists that included in their ranks Al Qaeda-trained nationals from several countries. In 1995, this group murdered four Belgian tourists inside Eritrea in cold blood. Sporadic cross-border acts of terror and subversion continue to this day.

In a statement contained in document S/1997/517 of 7 July 1997, my Government first warned the international community, and subsequently the then Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Security Council, that international terrorist threats from extreme fundamentalist Islamic groups were on the way.

The Eritrean Jihad terrorist movements, which are members of the Al Qaeda network, are now part of the so-called Alliance of Eritrean National Forces. This umbrella organization has bases and physical presences in some neighbouring, and a number of Western, countries. These groups continue to obtain sanctuary, as well as financial and other forms of assistance, from Western capitals.

As the fight against international terrorism assumes high priority and warrants concerted action, the Government of Eritrea requests full cooperation and joint action from the countries where these terrorist elements live, plan and launch their operations. At this juncture, I also wish to reiterate to the Assembly that the people and Government of Eritrea will continue to fight terrorism in all its forms.

Despite the declaration by the 1999 Algiers Summit of the OAU to make the year 2000 the year to end conflicts and to start a new momentum for peace in Africa, conflicts have continued to take a heavy toll on African peoples in many countries of the continent. This is indeed disappointing.

I come from the Horn of Africa, a subregion where conflicts and wars have been a way of life for many decades. The Horn of Africa is also a place that has seen many misfortunes. Recurring conflicts over past decades have claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, displaced a staggering number of people and forced millions out of their countries to live as refugees in foreign lands.

The internal conflict in the Sudan is now the longest running one in Africa. Under the framework of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a subregional entity, the State of Eritrea, together with the other member countries, is doing its best to bring about a resolution to this conflict. We have come a long way in bringing the conflicting parties to face-to-face talks. There are encouraging signs, but we cannot congratulate ourselves yet. Our efforts may be considered a success once quieter days of peace, stability and sustained prosperity prevail in that sisterly country. I must admit that we need the help of the international community to end the suffering of our brothers and sisters in the Sudan.

In the same vein, the problem in Somalia, another sisterly country in the Horn, continues to be a serious one that the international community cannot ignore. The vicious conflict in Somalia will have long-term catastrophic humanitarian consequences if the international community abandons this unfortunate country. The United Nations and the world community at large must help the Transitional National Government of Somalia to stabilize peace and security in the country. The international community should rush to save Somalia.

Now, on a positive note, let me tell the Assembly the good news regarding the border conflict between my country and Ethiopia. On 13 April this year, the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, a panel of five judges established by the Algiers agreement, made a judicial ruling on the entire 1,000-kilometer border between the two countries. The people and Government of Eritrea are pleased to see a legal solution to a conflict they never chose.

My Government believed from the very beginning that this conflict could not be settled by might, but by peaceful means alone. The pacifist A. J. Muste said it all: "There is no way to peace. Peace is the way".

The Boundary Commission has drawn the new border and is currently in the process of physically demarcating the lines on the ground. Completion of the demarcation is expected in the next few months. According to the Algiers agreement, which both countries signed, the decision of the Commission is

final and binding. Eritrea has reiterated its acceptance of the Commission's decision of 13 April 2002. Eritrea therefore believes that territorial claims and counter-claims ended on that day. In legal terms, the conflict ended then too.

Now that the conflict has legally been put to rest, the people of Eritrea want to leave this awful experience behind them and move on with life afresh. As Carl Bard said, "Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending." What matters is the destination point. The people and Government of Eritrea are committed to turning things around.

At the end of this saga, my delegation finds it fitting to pay tribute at the General Assembly to our peace-loving friends and partners who helped us to get here. Allow me therefore to particularly thank the former Organization of African Unity, now the African Union; President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria; the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan; the Government of the United States of America; and the European Union. We are grateful to them all for their valued efforts in this difficult and long peace process.

The year 2002 saw five important international gatherings aimed at bringing peace, security, human dignity and economic prosperity to the peoples of the world, big and small alike. Those meetings included the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, the special session on children in New York, the World Food Summit in Rome and, lastly, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. The promises and declarations of all these international events are tied in with the goals of the 2000 United Nations Millennium Declaration.

As we all know, those goals embrace the key dimensions of human development — related to poverty, hunger, education and health — stated as a set of time-bound targets. Those targets are: halving poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education and gender equality, reducing under-5 mortality by two thirds and maternal mortality by three quarters, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and halving the proportion of people who lack access to safe water. With 1990 as the base year, those targets are to be achieved by 2015.

Despite the promises of globalization and the many initiatives launched at various times to help the continent, Africa's economic growth is still lagging far behind. The success of development in Africa still depends on the political will of rich countries to provide financial assistance, on the one hand, and on the full ownership and effective execution of national development programmes by African countries themselves, on the other.

Having said that, I shall now, for the benefit of our partners, reiterate the five core principles underlying Eritrea's development strategy: first, developing the capabilities of our people as the principal asset and driving force of our development endeavours; secondly, establishing strong public-private sector partnerships; thirdly, striving to achieve self-reliance and avoiding chronic and debilitating dependency; fourthly, protecting the environment from the adverse effects of development programmes; and fifthly, establishing effective development partnerships with multilateral and bilateral development agencies, with Governments and with non-governmental organizations.

I would be remiss if I failed to bring to the attention of the Assembly the looming drought that threatens the lives of more than 1 million men, women and children in Eritrea. The failure of vital rains expected in the months of April and May has put their lives at risk. Famine is imminent if international aid does not reach the Eritrean people soon. I wish to use this occasion, therefore, to appeal to the donor community to respond to this pressing humanitarian need.

In conclusion, I wish to express my delegation's confidence that, under your able leadership, Mr. President, the fifty-seventh session will see much success.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Ion Botnaru, Chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Botnaru (Republic of Moldova): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, I join other delegations in congratulating Mr. Jan Kavan on his election as the President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for the competent manner in which he managed

this forum during the dramatic period of the previous session.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Swiss Confederation as a Member of our family of nations. We look forward to welcoming East Timor as the 191st Member of the United Nations in the near future.

One year after the terrible attacks of 11 September, we remember the innocent victims of those crimes. As a result of that tragedy, the world changed fundamentally in many ways. The international community agreed to start fighting terrorism in all its forms. The international anti-terrorism coalition, led by the United States, succeeded in significantly undermining the capacity of the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization and in removing the Taliban regime, which had hosted it. The General Assembly and the Security Council took prompt action resulting in mandatory measures aimed at eliminating all forms and manifestations of terrorism and requiring Member States to take administrative, financial, legal and other steps. The immediate, effective and, even more important, united action by the United Nations against a terrorist threat that had now reached a new level shows the Organization's continued importance and viability. Once more, we saw the capacity of the United Nations to fulfil its noble mission by uniting and mobilizing us for this relentless fight.

The Republic of Moldova supports those actions and reaffirms its commitment to fighting terrorism in all its forms. My country has been taking concrete action towards the implementation of all relevant United Nations decisions, especially Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1390 (2002). First, concrete steps have been taken to consolidate our domestic anti-terrorist legislation. Moldova presented two relevant reports to the Counter-Terrorism Committee. Only months after those tragic events, our Parliament adopted a law to combat terrorism and a law to prevent and combat money-laundering. Relevant modifications were introduced to the Criminal Code. With its recent accession to the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombing and to the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages, as well as its ratification[n of the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, Moldova is about to conclude its process of acceding to the 12 main international instruments related to combating terrorism. We call on all Member States to undertake new efforts to conclude the United Nations Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

At the same time, as a new independent State, we ask for expert support in implementing some of those complex measures. Moldova has shown its political will to combat terrorism by actively participating in new efforts within the framework of many regional and subregional organizations, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; the Commonwealth of Independent States; the Stability Pact for South-East Europe; the South-East Europe Cooperative Initiative; and the Georgia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova Group.

The stabilization and rehabilitation process in Afghanistan is a test for the Organization and for the rest of the international community. Considerable progress has been achieved, and we must commend the job done by the anti-terrorism coalition under very difficult conditions, the efforts of international donors and, above all, the efforts of the Afghanistan leadership, led by President Hamid Karzai. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, has repeatedly urged the international community to maintain its strong and active support for the Government and people of Afghanistan. We share the view that stability for Afghanistan must be seen within the context of a broader stabilization process that secures increased support from international financial organizations for all Central Asian countries.

Undoubtedly, there is an urgent need for more substantial efforts to bring an end to the Middle East conflict. This year has been marked by successive terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians and by Israel's disproportionate use of force against the Palestinians. We support the efforts of the Quartet to restart the peace process on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions in order to achieve the peaceful coexistence of Israel and an independent Palestinian State within secure and internationally recognized borders.

We share the concern expressed by many previous speakers on the situation concerning Iraq, and we call on Baghdad to comply immediately and fully with all relevant Security Council resolutions. In that regard, we welcome the statement made recently in this Hall by President Bush recognizing the central role of

the United Nations and calling on it to shoulder its responsibility. Moldova, a country with an economy in transition, attaches great importance to the United Nations agenda for development and, in particular, the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey this year, the Doha Development Agenda and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg constituted an essential step in the convergence of international efforts in such vital areas as the eradication of poverty and the reversal of environmental and resource degradation.

The external debt burden, the lack of necessary resources, weak financial and banking systems, frequent natural calamities and droughts are undermining many of the efforts made by our Governments. Unfortunately, some recommendations implemented at the request of and at the insistence of some international financial institutions have proved to be relatively, or even totally, ineffective. While they accept primary responsibility for the well-being of their citizens, many Governments in the developing world are still waiting for promised resources.

My country welcomes the entry into force on 1 July of this year of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which inaugurated a new era in the affirmation of fundamental human rights on the world stage. Moldova has begun preparations to join the ICC, which we believe will become an effective, competent and equitable legal instrument.

The recent debates in the General Assembly on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) demonstrate that the world strongly supports the unprecedented integration processes taking place on the African continent.

The Republic of Moldova welcomes the creation of the African Union. We share the view that the United Nations and the entire international community must remain fully engaged in resolving the conflicts that still prevail in many parts of Africa.

Conflict prevention is the central challenge facing our Organization. The Secretary-General called for the United Nations to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. Poverty, inequality and injustice are most frequently named as causes of conflicts. Separatism is also one of the phenomena provoking instability and conflicts in many parts of the world. While we are mentioning the improvement in the Balkan situation, there are still a number of so-called frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet area, creating instability in the entire region. Despite many years of negotiations the separatist regime in Transdniestria continues blatantly to ignore any efforts made by the Moldovan Government, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other countries, to oppress the local population and violate elementary human rights. By creating new obstacles to the process of removing ammunitions and weapons, the Transdniestrian separatist regime is putting at risk the fulfilment of the Istanbul OSCE Summit decision, which was reaffirmed by United Nations General Assembly resolution 55/179 concerning the withdrawal of all foreign forces and armaments from the territory of the Republic of Moldova by the end of this year.

Another reason for our deep concern is the existence of a huge quantity of unregistered arms at the disposal of paramilitary units. At industrial sites of the former Soviet military complex in that region, the separatist authorities produce different types of weapons, which are delivered through third countries to other areas of conflict, thus assisting terrorist and criminal groups, as well as other separatist regimes.

The considerable changes that have occurred recently in the international arena have highlighted the overwhelming role that the United Nations must play in order to consolidate democratic values and institutions and ensure peace and stability. My delegation fully supports the efforts made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan toward reforming our Organization. Some steps have been taken to revitalize the work of the General Assembly. The reform of the Security Council will make it more equitable and consistent with the expansion of the international community and will better reflect new realities. We support the expansion of permanent and non-permanent membership, so as to let those Member States that are willing and able, to better contribute to the maintenance of international peace and stability.

The United Nations has also contributed to the economic and social development of my country. United Nations agencies and especially the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have actively participated in the implementation of many important programmes, thus finding lasting solutions to many challenges and helping our young democracy to

survive. We also commend the activity of UNICEF in Moldova for helping the newest generation of our citizens navigate through this difficult period of transition.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to express my Government's warmest appreciation to the Secretary-General for the efforts he has exerted in order to maintain peace and security and for his outstanding contribution to promoting and fostering the role of the United Nations. The award of the centennial Nobel Peace Prize to the United Nations and its Secretary-General was highly welcomed all over the world.

In this year's annual report on the work of the Organization the Secretary-General writes:

> "Developments during the past year have affirmed the Organization's increasing relevance in world affairs, but a review of the work of the Organization is also a reminder that much still needs to be done to achieve the aims and goals of the Charter and the Millennium Declaration." (A/57/1, para. 230)

Let us work even harder to ensure that the United Nations is able to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: I now call on the chairman of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda, His Excellency Mr. Patrick Albert Lewis.

Mr. Lewis (Antigua and Barbuda): Let me express my country's delight in having Mr. Jan Kavan preside over this fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. Antigua and Barbuda owes much to the Czech Republic and the adherents of the religious ideas of Jan Hus, the Moravians, who arrived in Antigua in the mid-eighteenth century and administered to the slaves in a manner uncommon at that time. With humanity and audacity they provided education to chattel servants, which was certainly one of the foundations that led to the development of a sturdy, progressive, and optimistic people, who this year celebrate the twenty-first anniversary of successful independence.

Let me also pay tribute to Mr. Kavan's predecessor, His Excellency Han Seung-soo, who guided the fifty-sixth session through a perilous period, yet found time to formulate positions to streamline our work and enhance the functions of the President. I wish additionally to welcome Switzerland into this body; we are mindful of the contributions it has made to our endeavours over the many years that we wished that it would become formally incorporated.

On 18 June 2001 Antigua and Barbuda ratified the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court and was most pleased when on 11 April 2002 ten States simultaneously deposited instruments of ratification, which brought the number of States that had ratified the Statute to 66, six more than was required to bring it into force. The reality is that this has been achieved at a remarkably swift pace, demonstrating that the Governments and peoples of the globe recognized the need for the existence of such a body. My own country followed the process of development closely and participated in many conferences, seminars and preparatory commissions on the subject.

The adoption of the Statute manifested a revolution in legal and moral attitudes toward some of the worst crimes on earth. Whereas many developing States have suffered under the hard yoke of globalization, the International Criminal Court, with its principles of justice and the rule of law in international affairs represents a plus for the globalization process. Nonetheless, much work remains to be done in obtaining worldwide ratification of the Rome Statute, ensuring that the Court will have the appropriate mechanisms in place to begin functioning as early as possible and disseminating information to stakeholders at the national and international levels about the ICC, the Rome Statute and its supporting documents.

The fears of some States concerning the operation of the Court when it is effectuated next year must be overcome. The Statute has sufficient checks and balances to allay all fears, and we remain convinced that the ICC will be a legitimate judicial institution to adequately judge individuals for war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. We reiterate our conviction that this can be done while guaranteeing States their rights, as they are protected from any interference by the Court if they pursue such crimes at the national level, and that the prosecutor's autonomous power is accompanied by guarantees against using the Court for specious or politically motivated endeavours.

Although we are thrilled at the pace of development with regard to the Court, if we look closer it reveals the peripheral influence of Caribbean States.

It was Trinidad and Tobago that revived the idea of the ICC 41 years after the idea was first discussed. But the specific concerns that Trinidad and Tobago and other Caribbean States advanced as reasons for creating the ICC have been put on the back burner. We had pleaded for a court that would try, and sentence, those involved in the trans-shipment of narcotics, in carrying out acts of terrorism and in committing marine violations, including those in our territorial waters. I am sure that it is not lost on members that in 1989 we were emphasizing the need for the proposed court to try terrorists. The Court is an acknowledgement of that. It emphasizes genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes — and we support this. Yet we remain akin to Ralph Ellison's "invisible man".

During the previous session, there were three major meetings on what can broadly be classified as financing for development. At Doha, 142 countries agreed to launch the next round of World Trade Organization negotiations. Once again developing countries, particularly those with monocultures, found themselves stymied with regard to getting favourable terms for their agricultural products, but were successful in convincing developed countries that it was acceptable to override patents to stem public health crises such as HIV/AIDS. Developed nations feared that that would diminish the effectiveness of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and discourage pharmaceutical research, but proponents of the change argued forcibly from the humanitarian perspective.

Delegates from the developing countries left the conference hoping to get better results at Monterrey — a Conference whose title specifically referred to financing for development. Unfortunately, most decisions were made before the statements of the well-prepared delegates from both developed and developing countries could be structurally evaluated.

At Monterrey, there were repeated references by both developed and developing countries to the fact that half of the world's population lived on less than $2 a day. But to any objective observer, it was never clear from the pronouncements of the dominant countries whether they could best help by significantly increasing foreign aid or by more concretely targeting their assistance to make it more effective. Many of the developing countries kept signalling that both measures were necessary and should be undertaken.

It appeared that women were particularly disappointed with the Conference. The Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, Noeleen Heyzer, declared, "you cannot talk about halving poverty without looking at the feminization of poverty". Heyzer was critical of the fact that the Conference was working with static poverty statistics. A member of her staff pointed out that new ways of financing development had to consider protecting domestic industries while preparing women to take advantage of new opportunities. Ms. Heyzer stated that the meeting should have considered institutional and legal barriers to women's advancement, such as banking systems that did not lend to women, and customary laws which prevented female ownership of land.

In reality, not only aid, but a complete overhauling of the present unidimensional focus of globalization should have come out of Monterrey. The goals — halving the proportion of people living on less than $1 a day by 2015, accelerating the process of providing access by individuals to clean water, and ensuring gender equity, particularly with regard to education — cannot be considered to have been adequately dealt with by simply stating that aid from the developed world would increase from $50 billion to $100 billion.

In addition, it must be recalled that only one third of the $50 billion is spent in poor countries, while the level of aid and the conditionalities attached to it makes it difficult to spend the rest effectively. The stringent conditions set by donors also have an impact on the sovereignty of developing nations. Thus, jumping from $50 billion to $100 billion without revamping existing measures of disbursal and implementation will not have the desired effect.

Fortunately, the developing countries, through their perseverance, were able to receive greater consideration in Johannesburg. The recent World Summit on Sustainable Development represents the strongest effort by the international community to promote sustainable development through the adoption, as set out in the Summit's Plan of Implementation, of significant and concrete commitments to improve the lives of people living in poverty and to reverse the continuing degradation of the global environment.

As a small developing State, my country sought to contribute to the overriding theme of the Summit:

the promotion of action. In this respect, we commend the Summit for the major progress made in addressing some of the most pressing concerns of small island developing States, namely, poverty and the environment, and welcome the commitments to increase access to clean water and proper sanitation and to energy services; to improve health conditions and agriculture, particularly in dry lands; and to better protect the world's biodiversity and ecosystems. However the Summit's failure to agree on a target date for increasing the use of renewable energy was a major disappointment to all small island developing States.

The true test of the Summit's success will be in the follow-up actions at all levels. While in and of itself the Summit generated a sense of urgency, commitments for action, and partnerships to achieve measurable results, concerted activity must be undertaken. Antigua and Barbuda therefore calls on all actors to honour their commitments and undertake the necessary actions to fight poverty and protect the environment through the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the General Assembly's Millennium Declaration and Agenda 21, adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This will require a significant increase in financial resources, as elaborated in the Monterrey Consensus.

Antigua and Barbuda has every intention of adhering to the time allotment, but must of necessity touch on a few other issues. Unfortunately, we must recall the threat of terrorism. We have been working diligently to fulfil the United Nations requirements in that respect. We must, however, move ahead and plan for the future positively. We welcome the New Partnership for Africa's Development and are eagerly awaiting the entry of East Timor into this body.

While welcoming East Timor, we must again express our deep dissatisfaction that a referendum has not been held in the Western Sahara. The question of the Western Sahara involves the right of self-determination, a fundamental principle of the United Nations. As long as the conflict remains, the regional security in a significant part of the Maghreb will remain at risk. Clearly, the success or failure of the United Nations will enhance or compromise the credibility of the current international system.

A small developing State, such as Antigua and Barbuda, cannot deliver a statement at the United Nations General Assembly without mentioning the imperfections of globalization and calling again for meaningful remedies. When we consider the present thrust toward globalization, we once again see our lack of significance in the global scheme of operations.

Clearly, globalization leads to the reduction of the sovereignty of States, with the weakest and the smallest being the biggest losers. Sadly lacking in the arguments for globalization is mention of the need to give consideration to the pace, direction and content of liberalization. We must bear in mind the different levels of development and the need to build up national capabilities. There is much insistence on free trade for the developing world and yet exemptions from free trade are claimed for the industrialized countries. Protective devices are built in for farmers in the dominant economies. These include subsidies, guaranteed markets, payments not to produce beyond a certain level in order to maintain means of processing, and all of this is done under the most stringent of guidelines.

On the other hand, when former colonial countries provide preferences to their previous colonies for investments, challenges are mounted through the World Trade Organization by multinational enterprises. All this is done with the clear knowledge that in modern times there has never been free trade.

Recently, the envoy of a very large country, seeking the support of Antigua and Barbuda for his candidature to a major international committee, praised our twin-island state for its prominence, rationality and objectivity in international affairs. He went on to state that small States are generally more objective in recognizing which countries ought to have positions on major international bodies. This is, in his view, due to the fact that small States can consider issues without having to take into consideration the pressures from large armies and the need to maintain international prominence. Consequently, small States view issues from the perspective of how policies affect the entire globe, of how there can be improvements for all people, and of what the consequences of certain actions will be.

It was an exchange that sobered and uplifted me for an entire week. Yes, small States can contribute much and have a significant role to play in the United Nations. But we need to be looked at and to be listened to. We have much to contribute. We will continue to

speak out, to speak up, to advocate, to plead and entreat. We urge that we be fully recognized, for we are positive, compassionate and forward-looking.

I end by offering to you the motto of my country: "Each endeavouring: all achieving."

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.